

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

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R 080832Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9001

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, GB, DM

SUBJ: GOG REACTS TO BENIN ALLEGATIONS

1. APPEARS GOG HAS FINALLY REACTED OFFICIALLY TO BENIN'S ALLEGATIONS OF GABONESE INVOLVEMENT IN JANUARY 16 MERCENARY ATTACK IN COTONOU. MARCH 7 LIBREVILLE DAILY "L'UNION" CARRIED SHORT REPORT OF FONMIN MARTIN BONGO'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK MARCH 4 IN WHICH HE CATEGORICALLY REJECTED CHARGES RAISED BY BENIN BEFORE OAU COMMISSION OF INQUIRY AND U.N. FACT FINDING COMMISSION. MINISTER BONGO IS ALSO QUOTED AS INVITING U.N. MISSION THAT WAS IN COTONOU TO VISIT GABON AS WELL TO INVESTIGATE CHARGES FULLY.

2. FONMIN BONGO'S STATEMENTS ARE FIRST OFFICIAL GOG REACTION TO CHARGES WHICH HAVE BEEN IN NEWS SINCE FEBRUARY 25 WHEN OAU COMMISSION REPORTED FINDINGS TO OAU FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN LOME. SHORT EDITORIAL IN GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED DAILY FEBRUARY 28 LINKED BENIN'S ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GABON AND MOROCCO WITH EFFORTS TO PROMOTE POLISARIO CAUSE WITHIN OAU, BUT NO GOVERNMENT FIGURE SPOKE OUT AGAINST CHARGES NOR WAS THERE ANY OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE PRIOR TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINISTER BONGO'S NEW YORK PRESS CONFERENCE.

3. COMMENT: NOT PARTICULARLY SURPRISING THAT GOG HAS BEEN SLOW AND CAUTIOUS IN REACTING TO BENIN'S CHARGES AND HAS FINALLY TAKEN RELATIVELY MILD POSITION IN COMPARISON WITH STRONG STANCE ADOPTED BY MOROCCO. FOR ONE THING, PRESIDENT BONGO, PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND FOUR OTHER KEY MEMBERS OF GOG HAVE BEEN OUT OF COUNTRY

SINCE BEFOR LOME CONFERENCE. THERE HAS LITERALLY BEEN NO ONE IN
LIBREVILLE CAPABLE OF MAKING POLICY STATEMENTS FOR GOG SINCE NEWS
OF BENIN'S CHARGES BROKE. MOREOVER, PRESIDENT BONGO, WITH SUCCESS
OF "HIS" LIBREVILLE OAU CHIEFS OF STATE CONFERENCE UPPERMOST IN
IMPORTANCE NOW, WOULD NOT RISK TAKING AS RADICAL POSITION AS THAT
CHOSEN BY KING HASSA. NEVERTHELESS, BONGO -- WHO STOPPED IN RABAT
MARCH 5 ON WAY TO CLERO AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT -- WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CO-
ORDINATE STRATEGY WITH KING HASSAN IN COUNTERING BENIN'S CHARGES.
STEIGMAN

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